



Balta Lelija

20. October 2026

Side Note: “Thoughts on the Saints”

It is not uncommon for me to include a few words about the saints between the Gospel meditations and the readings, as well as in some spiritual teachings. It is always a great joy for me to share about them. Today I would like to present some thoughts by Dietrich von Hildebrand on this topic and comment on them briefly.

In his insightful book, *Trojan Horse in the City of God*, he addresses many topics to explain the crisis in the Church. He devotes a chapter to the saints, and it is well worth listening to what he has to say. It will help us to examine and appreciate the person and message of the saints even more closely.

Hildebrand writes:

“Every saint is a realization of the kingdom of God for which we pray in the Our Father; for in him grace has brought forth all its fruits and, in his personality, the Sacred Humanity of Christ is reflected. One saint thus glorifies God more than all the improvements of man's earthly welfare ever could, to say nothing of "evolutionary processes" or "cosmic events." Moreover, every saint is an incredible gift to us from God. We are privileged to witness Christ's triumph in a human being, to taste the very essence of holiness. Any man who does not experience this as a wonderful gift, who is not inebriated by the fact that in every saint's personality we are granted a glimpse of the supernatural glory, does not really love Christ and is no real Catholic.”

He goes on to explain:

“For many Catholics who proudly call themselves progressives, purely humanitarian activities and social institutions are more attractive than holiness. They have become blind to the light of Christ. Further, the ideal they have chosen is far removed from the challenge that every saint embodies. Striving for social justice — good and honorable as it is — does not presuppose that we die to ourselves, that we break with the spirit of the world, that we renounce Satan and the pomp of this world. But every saint, by the resplendent fact of his holiness, shakes our consciences and calls us also to renounce the world and its pomp.”

We recognize that Dietrich von Hildebrand, in his writings, bears witness to a deep-rootedness in the holy Catholic faith. From this foundation, he analyzes the apostasy taking place within the Church, an apostasy that he experienced painfully and sought to counteract through his writings. He was particularly pained to see how the precious treasure of doctrine and the pursuit of holiness were being pushed into the background, and he did not shy away from calling things by their proper names and identifying their causes. That is why the book is titled *Trojan Horse in the City of God*. It was clear to Hildebrand that a spirit alien to the Church was at work within it, seeking to weaken it from within. Thus, it becomes evident that the “relegation to the background” of the veneration of the saints is orchestrated by a spirit that harms the Church as a whole and also seeks to distract from the very essence of the veneration of the saints.

Thus, Hildebrand makes it clear:

“The saints are an uncomfortable challenge to those who do not thirst for holiness. Because these progressive Catholics do not want their complacency disturbed, because they do not wish to be drawn out of the ghetto of the “secular city,” they want to eliminate the saints. The saints bring the supernatural uncomfortably near. They confront us with the ethos of holiness and disturb those who interpret the Christian life according to their own fashion.

All those who show no interest in the existence of saints, who try to exclude the saints from the life of the Church as much as possible, only prove that something is wrong in their relationship with Christ. We should not forget that the Church’s doctrine of justification expressly emphasizes the possibility that a person can be completely transformed in Christ, that everyone is called to become a saint.”

With his words, Prof. Hildebrand gives us yet another reason to look to the saints and their lives, aside from the help they grant us at all times, so that we may work fruitfully together in the collaboration between the heavenly and the militant Church.

The proper veneration of the saints is also a rejection of the spirit of modernism, which may still recognize saints who were particularly devoted to charity and established corresponding works, but no longer values those who, through their inner journey, call their brothers and sisters on earth to holiness.

This is yet another reason to continually reflect on the lives of the saints, to take joy in them, and to allow ourselves to be challenged in our own journey of following Christ.

Meditation on the reading of the Day in the Novus Ordo:

<https://en.elijamission.net/reflections-on-the-church/>