

“Sometimes listening to people becomes monotonous and extremely boring . . . but in such cases it helps to remember that even when Jesus was about to fall the third time, he patiently consoled the women-folk and children of his persecutors, making no exceptions.”

— Fr. Solanus Casey

BEFORE I DIE, I WANT TO ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING GREAT. THAT WAY, PEOPLE WILL REMEMBER ME.

But what if I don't accomplish anything great? What if I fail to live up to the expectations that people have of me or that I have of myself? Would I be forgotten? Would I be dismissed? Perhaps that is the fear that drives me—I'm afraid that I simply do not matter, that I will not make a difference.

The example of Solanus Casey should ease my fear. He wasn't impressive. Casey didn't found a religious order. He wasn't a martyr. There are no tomes expressing his wisdom that will be quoted for endless ages. He wasn't a pope or a president. Solanus Casey almost failed out of the seminary. Even though he was ordained a priest, he wasn't allowed to preach or hear confessions. The Capuchin friar was relegated to being a simple doorkeeper at St. Bonaventure Monastery in Detroit.

Fr. Solanus may have accomplished little by human standards. Yet his deep love for God made it impossible for him not to love others. His love allowed him to listen with wisdom and compassion to everyone he encountered. This was his great accomplishment. When he died, over 20,000 people showed up at his funeral.

Solanus Casey teaches me that wisdom and compassion are twins. If I am wise—that is, knowledgeable in the ways of God—then I will be compassionate. And if I am compassionate—following the ways of God—then I will be wise.

And that is all I want to achieve.

MEDITATION: ACHIEVEMENTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In this meditation, you will take a look at your achievements and accomplishments.

How did they bring glory to God?

1. PONDER THE FOLLOWING SCRIPTURE VERSE, ALLOWING YOUR MIND TO BECOME LIGHT AND STILL AND YOUR BREATHING EVEN AND SMOOTH: “Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.” (*Philippians 3:7*)

2. WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OR ACCOMPLISHMENT? What is it that you are most proud of in your life? What sacrifices did you have to make to achieve your goal? What blessings did you receive? As you recall this achievement, pay particular attention to the feelings that you associate with it.

FR. SOLANUS CASEY (1870–1957)

LOYOLAPRESS.
A JESUIT MINISTRY

3. IMAGINE TALKING TO JESUS AS ONE TRUSTED FRIEND TALKS TO ANOTHER. Tell him about your achievement. He asks you, “How has this achievement brought glory to my Father? How has this achievement made present the Kingdom of Heaven? How has this achievement made you a person of compassion and mercy?” Take note of the tone of his voice and his body language. What do you think that tells you? How do you answer him?

4. ASK JESUS TO SHOW YOU HOW TO BE COMPASSIONATE AND MERCIFUL. What does he tell you? How does that affect the way you perceive your accomplishment? Does it have the same luster as before? Would you now count it as loss? Talk to Jesus about whatever you may be feeling or thinking.

5. CLOSE WITH THIS PRAYER OR ONE OF YOUR OWN: Fr. Solanus, help me remember to seek God’s glory, not my own. I ask this in Jesus’ name. Amen.

This reflection is by Bob Burnham, the author of Little Lessons from the Saints: 52 Simple and Surprising Ways to See the Saint in You, available from Loyola Press. Visit www.loyolapress.com/burnham.