Introduction

Company always sounded a joyful note in the Sicilian home of my childhood. It meant we were going to hear exotic stories, loud, boisterous laughter, and impassioned, arguments. This revelry was only calmed when abundant servings of “coffee and…” made their way to the kitchen table. For Italians, the kitchen table continues to be the hearth of hospitality.

When company visited we understood that they were to be welcomed, greeted with a kiss or hug and a bright smile. It never entered our minds to remain in our rooms or dare to show a hint of disinterest. Often they were blood relatives, but if they were not, they were the next best thing. We called the adults, “uncle” or “aunt.” We called those close to us in age, cousins. We thought of them as family, people who anchored our days with love, trust and those treasured memories that bind people together. They were included in our family circle, and we were in theirs...forever...no matter what challenges or good times awaited us.

So such are the saints! They are the friends and prophets of God with whom we share baptism. Instead of blood being that inseparable bond that links families together, saints remind us that the waters of baptism create a communion among us that is eternal. Saints, like company, are the people we welcome into our lives and with whom we share our spiritual tables. Literally, as the word “company” expresses, they are the ones with whom we break bread and share a meal. They share in our laughter and they dry our tears when loss overwhelms us.

The following Lenten reflections and prayers are an opportunity to make new friends and welcome new companions into our lives. They are brief reflections about some of the Franciscan women and men who have taken to heart the example of Francis of Assisi. His company inspired them to flame the fires of faith. His friendship with Christ gave them the courage to live for God alone. And his love for all God’s creation led them to believe that God is the one on whom our hearts ever depend.

Company is coming. With anxious anticipation, let us welcome them.

N.B. Most of the saints listed here are remembered on their feast day. There are several exceptions. These reflections are influenced by a variety of spiritual writers.