

Feast of All Saints

Cycle A, 11.1.20

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14/1 John 3:1-3

/Matthew 5:1-12

OH, HOW I WANT TO BE IN THAT NUMBER WHEN THE SAINTS GO MARCHING IN...

The Book of Revelation has a fascination with numbers as we heard in our first scripture reading – “144,000 marked with the sacred seal”—salvation portrayed in numbers. The COVID-19 pandemic is most frequently portrayed in numbers: the number of new cases a day, the number of hospitalizations, the number of deaths. Sadly, those numbers are increasing daily in our country. But there may be some of us who know all too painfully that every one of those numbers is a human being: someone who loved and was loved, someone whose life was a story worth telling and remembering. Gary Guerrero, our Youth Minister, confirmation Director and school teacher, as well as April French, a parishioner, both lost their Moms at the beginning of the pandemic. They know the pain and sadness firsthand. In March, a new Twitter feed had been set up to tell those stories. It's called **@FacesofCovid**. The Twitter feed combs newspapers all over the country — from The New York Times to small-town weeklies — collecting the stories of the over 200,000 Americans who have died of the coronavirus. It reads like a litany of saints:

- **Margaret**, a loving mother and grandmother, remembered by family and friends for her selflessness and generosity.
- **Wendell**, the beloved school bus driver, known for his limitless good humor and care for every child on his bus.
- **Reva**, 86, who dropped out of high school to care for her younger brothers and sisters, then returned to school later in life and

would go on to be an educator herself, helping others to complete their GED.

- **Rebecca**, an infectious-disease specialist who helped other physicians deal with COVID-19 as well as treating hundreds of her own patients before succumbing to the virus herself.
- **Michael**, a 33-year veteran volunteer firefighter and EMT in his community who died after contracting COVID-19 during a response to a residence where the patient had a known case of the virus.
- **Ashlee**, 34, a middle-school special-ed teacher, adored by her students, who was known to use her own money to pay for whatever a student needed, from school supplies to clothes.
- **Cheryl**, 60, who impacted countless lives in her long career as an ICU nurse.
- **Tyler**, 29, a husband, dad and youth hockey coach.
- **Maria**, 63, known as the “mother” of the emergency room where she worked as head nurse. One of her four adult daughters — all of whom are nurses — said of her mom, “*She showed me how to be selfless.*”
- **Ali**, 59, a former boxer and respected trainer who joined his son to make a downtown gym a safe haven for kids from families at risk.



@FacesofCovid is the work of Alex Goldstein, a communications company executive. He said: “*I think it’s very easy in moments like this to allow ourselves to become numb to the statistics and not see the faces that are behind these numbers.*”

It was the death of 9/11 first responder Anthony Iraci of New York who died of the virus that inspired **@FacesofCovid**. Mr. Goldstein who began this project said of Anthony: *“He had a weakened immune system and compromised respiratory system because of his response to 9/11, which made him much more susceptible to COVID-19.”* **@FacesOfCOVID** has been up and running on Twitter since the end of March. With the help of his friend Scott, Goldstein spends some time each day scouring the websites of about 40 top regional newspapers across the country. They read every story so they can add a thread about the individual’s life — and how family and community were blessed by each person’s presence. Their work is a “litany of saints” for this difficult time.



Today we celebrate the feast of all the saints — not just the “official” saints like the Elizabeth Setons and the Francis de Sales or Francis Assisi, or early saints like Perpetua and contemporary saints like Mother Teresa — but the saints we have known and who have lived among us, the “blessed” of the Gospel through whom God touches us and our world. Today we honor the holy men and women who have walked among us and who have touched our lives by the example of their humility and selflessness, their generosity and

compassion. Let’s remember with gratitude today the blessings they have been to us; may the lives of our own “litany of saints” inspire us to follow the example of their grace-filled lives so that, one day, we may join their company in the dwelling place of God.



We believe, in our faith, that we are all connected, brothers and sisters and children of the one God – the “communion of Saints” which we profess in our Creed. In Christ we each bear the name “Christian” – a name that connects all of us with deep and lasting ties. These are the ordinary people who had an uncommon talent for doing ordinary things extraordinarily well. They came in all colors, shapes and sizes. They spoke different languages but all their voices blend into one song as they join to praise the One from whom their greatness comes. We are one with all of them.



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