

Homily
All Saints
Nov. 1, 2022

When we think of saints, what comes to mind? An image on a holy card, or in a stained glass window? Or maybe a majestic statue? We probably think of the famous saints like Mary, Peter and Paul, Francis, Mother Teresa. But most of the saints aren't famous, and don't have churches named after them. Most of the saints are unknown to us, their names are known only to God, and it's those saints that we honor today on the Solemnity of All Saints.

On this holy day of the Church, we're remembering the countless martyrs who have died through the ages for their faith in Jesus Christ. We're remembering the great missionaries who traveled into unknown lands so they could proclaim Christ to the nations. We remember those who served the poor so heroically, who gave up their own possessions and even their lives to help others. We remember the great teachers of the faith, those who have handed on the faith down through the generations. We don't know all their names, but God does, and they are with him in heaven.

But we're also remembering the ordinary people who lived ordinary lives in communion with our Lord. The husbands and wives, mothers and fathers who dedicated themselves to each other and to their families, even when this meant great sacrifice, and who shared the gift of faith with their children. The health care workers who attended to the sick and comforted them in their need. The public servants who looked out for our safety day in and day out. The farmer who tilled the land, trusting in God's providence. The business people and laborers who always tried to carry out their work with integrity and honesty. The neighbor who made a point to look after the elderly. And on and on. Heaven is filled with unsung heroes who lived holy lives. Maybe we even know some of them, our own grandparents and parents, a co-worker, a friend, a neighbor.

The point is that we are all called to holiness, we are all called to be saints. God created us to share in his eternal life, and even though we sin, he has saved us by the death and resurrection of his Son. He has opened the way for us to live forever with him in heaven, and heaven is already filled with millions of souls who already share in the blessedness of God. Why? Because they lived out the Gospel, the ways of holiness that we just heard, that we call the Beatitudes. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven... Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy... Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God... Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Brothers and sisters, the Church honors the saints today to celebrate our Lord's work of salvation. Thanks to God's infinite mercy and thanks to the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, there are countless saints in heaven already. With God's grace they strove for holiness here on earth, and now they rejoice in God's presence in heaven. So we rejoice with them, and we thank God for calling them to himself. We also turn to them for inspiration and intercession. They give us an example of the holy lives we are all called to live, even in the most ordinary ways. They show us that with God's help, it's possible, it can be done. The Gospel teachings of our Lord aren't unreasonable or out of reach. They are for all of us, because we were all made to be with God in heaven. And we also know that we can still turn to the saints in our need. Just as we pray for each other, so do the saints in heaven still pray for us. We are all part of the communion of saints, and the holy ones in heaven are helping us along the way, urging us on and supporting us as we make our own journey through life with our Lord.

A French philosopher from the last century once said: "The only real sadness, the only real failure, the only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint." And why is that? Because to be anything less than

holy is to miss out on the greatest adventure of all, the adventure of being a disciple of Jesus Christ and spending eternity with God. Nothing else will give us lasting blessedness, or happiness. Nothing else will fulfill our deepest desires. And like the saints who are in heaven, we should not settle for anything less.