

[Readings: Rev. 7:2-4, 9-14; Psalm 24; 1 John 3:1-3; Matt 5:1-12a]

Once upon a time, a fellow finds himself in front of the Pearly Gates at the entrance to Heaven. St. Peter, the porter of the gates, explains that it's not easy to enter into Heaven. "There are some criteria's that must be meet before entry is allowed. For example, were you a church goer or religious?" "No", responded the man. St. Peter told him, "That's bad. Were you generous, giving money to the poor or to charities?" "No," he responded again. This too was bad, said St. Peter. St. Peter then asked him if he did any good deeds, such as helping his neighbor. Anything? Again he said "NO."

St. Peter was becoming concerned. Exasperated, St. Peter says, "Look, everyone does something kind sometime. Work with me, here! I'm trying to help. Now think!" The man thinks for a minute, then says, "Well, I did help this old lady once. I came out of a store and saw that a dozen members of a motorcycle gang had taken her purse and were shoving her around. I threw my bags down and got her purse back, then I told the biggest biker there that he was cowardly and I spat in his face." "WOW," said St. Peter, "That's impressive! When did this happen?" The man looked at his watch and replied, "Oh, about 15 minutes ago."

In *Sister Wendy's Book of Saints*, art historian Sister Wendy Beckett writes about us: "Holiness can so easily appear as something remote from us, to be read about or . . . gazed at, but from afar. Yet to be a saint is a wholly practical and realistic growth into our own truth. It is what we are all meant to become, it is our deepest fulfillment, our own personal realization of what we have been potentially from birth. There is no play about sanctity. *It starts from where we are and what we are.*"

You and I are living between our baptism and our Funeral Mass. Today's Feast of All Saints reminds us of those men, women, young adults and children who have won the crown of eternal life and enjoy seeing and being with God face to face. Today's Feast of All Saints challenges us to move deeper into the saint we were born to be.

In the song, "Abba, Father," we acknowledge that He is the potter and that we are the clay, the work of His hands. We pray that God molds us and fashions us into the very image of Jesus Christ, His Son.

This is the in-between time, the present moment, when the Divine Potter – God – melts us, molds us, shapes us and uses us for His divine purpose, as a potter shapes clay. The potter has a definite design in mind. "What shall I make of this lump of clay?" the Potter asks.

If we are pliable, if we allow ourselves to be shaped by God, we become the precious work of art He wants us to be. If we are stubborn, hardened or uncooperative, the Potter smashes us on the wheel and starts all over. When life smashes us, God's poor but beloved clay, we look to the Potter to help make things right.

St. John reminds us in our Second Reading today that even though we have feet and hearts of clay, we too are sons and daughters of God, His children. NOW! RIGHT NOW!!! So we can call God, "Abba," "Daddy," as well as the Master Potter. We are clay, the work of God's hands.

The Beatitudes which we heard proclaimed in today's Gospel, shows us the method, the "how" of being molded and shaped into God's image and likeness. Realizing our need for God. Being sad with those who are sad. Controlling our ego and pride. Showing mercy. Having only one purpose in life: to know God, to love God, and to serve God. To strive, to celebrate and to serve, as we say in our parish mission statement.

Today's celebration of All Saints is an emphatic reminder that our faith heroes are the people we now honor as saints. Our First Reading from Revelation makes two attempts to give us the number of our "holy heroes." John tells us he "heard the number of those who had been marked by the seal, one hundred and forty-four thousand." This is not a literal number. This multiple of a decade, a dozen and a thousand are numbers signifying completeness and is meant to be all-inclusive. Even if it was to be taken literally, the Roman Catholic Church has officially acknowledged only twelve thousand of them. We still have a way to go!

Then, to make sure that nobody is left out of the count, John writes that he has a "vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people and tongue." We cannot possibly know all of them. But it is possible and important that we get to know some of them, even those who lived among us and with us in our time and in our place. Like Pope St. John Paul II, St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Blessed Fr. Solanus Casey, and 15-year-old Carlo Acutis. Who knows, the list might even include you and me one day! St. Paul calls them "that great cloud of witnesses," men, women, young adults and children interceding for us, cheering us on, and waiting for us to join them one day. AMEN!