

## **Church of the Divine Love**

**Sermon Sunday November 1st, 2020**

**Revelation 7: 9-17; Psalm 43: 1-10,22; 1 John 3: 1-3; Matthew 5: 1-12**

**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen**

**Sisters and brothers in Christ,**

Allow me to start with some questions today. What does it mean to be saint? When and how do we become saints? What does it require from us to be saints?

Today we are celebrating All Saints' Day. All baptized Christians who have died and are now with God in glory are considered saints. All Saints Day is intended to honor the memory of countless unknown and uncanonized saints who have no feast days. Today we thank God for giving ordinary men and women a share in His holiness and Heavenly glory as a reward for their Faith. This feast is observed to teach us to honor the saints, both by imitating their lives and by seeking their intercession for us before Christ, the only mediator between God and man (1 Tm 2:5). The Church reminds us today that God's call for holiness is universal, that all of us are called to live in His love and to make His love real in the lives of those around us. Holiness is related to the word wholesomeness. We grow in holiness when we live wholesome lives of integrity, truth, justice, charity, mercy, and compassion, sharing our blessings with others.

The saints are our role models. They teach us by their lives that Christ's holy life of love, mercy and unconditional forgiveness can, with the grace of God, be lived by ordinary people from all walks of life and at all times. The saints are the instruments that God uses to work miracles at present, just as He used the staff of Moses in Exodus, the bones of the prophet Elisha (2Kgs 13:21), the towel of Paul (Acts 19:12) and the shadow of Peter (Acts 5:15) to work miracles.

Today we are invited to take the shortcuts practiced by three Saints: First), St. Teresa of Avila: Recharge your spiritual batteries every day by prayer, namely, listening to God and talking to Him. Second), St. Therese of Lisieux: Convert every action into prayer by offering it to God for His glory and for the salvation of souls and by doing God's will to the best of your ability. Third) St. Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa): Do ordinary things with great love. Do something beautiful for God. All baptized Christians who have died and are now with God in glory are considered saints. All Saints Day is a day on which we thank God for giving ordinary men and women a share in His holiness and Heavenly glory as a reward for their Faith. In fact, we celebrate the feast of each canonized saint on a particular day of the year. But there are countless other saints and martyrs, men, women and children united with God in Heavenly glory, whose feasts we do not celebrate. Among these would be our own parents and grandparents, brothers and sisters who were heroic women and men of Faith. All Saints Day is intended to honor their memory. Hence, today's feast can be called the feast of the Unknown Saint, in line with the tradition of the Unknown Soldier. Today, the Church reminds us that God's call for holiness is universal and that all of us are called to live in His love and to make His love real in the lives of those around us. We show holiness when we live lives of integrity and truth, that is, wholesomeness and integrated lives in which we are close to others while being close to God.

The celebration of the Feast of all Saints is a celebration of all saints by both definitions. It's a celebration in which we give thanks for the many heroes of our faith, some who even died for our faith, because through their exemplary lives we see God's work in beautiful ways. We thank God for the writers of the accounts of the Gospel, through whose efforts we have knowledge of Jesus' life among us. We give thanks for the many Christian martyrs who died that the faith might live. We give thanks in a more personal way for those whom we have known and loved, through whose lives and words we have experienced God's love, parents, teachers, priests, and friends. Through these heroes of the faith Christ has come to us in meaningful ways. The Feast of all Saints is also a celebration of who we are and of whose we are. God has made us his people. Through our baptism, we belong to God. That's why we should celebrate this ancient holy day, to remind ourselves who we are and how we have come to this point in our journey of faith. All of us are saints of God. We are a holy people, not because our lives are what they should be, but because God has made us a part of God's family. However, since we are a part of God's family, we are called to be responsible members of that family. We begin our life together as a holy people, because God has made us holy. He then calls us to be holy in our daily lives. Our pilgrimage together is one of becoming what we already are.

To be saint is to be blessed by God. The message that we get from the God's Word today is that we are blessed. Because the reign of God has come into our lives, we are blessed. God will take care of you and give you the world. God will fill the emptiness in your heart and soul and forgive your sins. You will know God and be known as God's sons and daughters. Even when people mistreat you, you will be in good company. The Kingdom of Heaven is closer than it has ever been. Jesus the King looked at his disciples... Jesus looks at his disciples... Jesus looks at you and says, "Blessed are you!"

Whenever we affirm our belief in the communion of saints we are affirming so much: our debt of gratitude to Christians in the past who have passed on the faith to us; our belief that the Church is indeed a community of people united in Christ and that we have been called into that community through the grace of God; and our hope that God will enable us to become what we already are, the holy common people of God, the communion of saints.

Living out the love of the Gospel is a huge challenge; it is a challenge to ourselves and it is a challenge to the powers of the world. It is a call to live differently, to love extravagantly, to care deeply, to pray without ceasing, to tend to the needs of your neighbor, to see everyone as your neighbor, to find the face of Jesus in the marginalized, and to work to change a system that puts people and the planet at the margins.

You may or may not see your reward on earth for this work. People have lived and many faithful people have died at the hands of men across the millennia. But if you live as a peacemaker, if you seek justice, if you live with integrity, if you are humble and merciful, you are living the life God calls you to live as a saint. And you are a saint now in God and will be a saint in the life to come.

**Amen**