

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

Everybody loves a big reunion with loved ones – the joy of seeing one another, telling stories and of course the food and fun! The Solemnity of All Saints is exactly like this. Pope Francis said, “We are all united with all the saints, not just the most well-known. But also those “next door” – our family members and acquaintances who are now part of that great multitude.” So today is a family celebration. The saints are close to us, indeed, they are our truest brothers and sisters. They understand us, they love us, they know what is truly good for us, they help us and they await us.

We believe that there is a unity and interaction among all the faithful in Christ. During these early November celebrations, those of us still living (the Church Militant) unite our hearts with, and in a special way remember, the faithful departed, whether they are in Heaven (the Church Triumphant) or in Purgatory (the Church Suffering). Pope Saint Paul VI calls all of us “The Faithful.”

St. Paul addresses the early Christians as “saints” (Eph. 1:1) and refers to those in Heaven as “that great crowd of witnesses.” Judas Maccabeus urges prayers for the dead, “that they may be absolved of their sin” (2 Mc 12:46). And the visionary of the Book of Revelation (Rv. 7:9-10) sees “a great multitude” as they stand before the throne of God.

The theologian Hans Kung puts it this way: there are no “self-made saints.” In today’s First Reading, we are reminded that nobody in Heaven had been perfect in life, no one had been free from hardships. Indeed, some had died for their faith. All of them had “survived the time of great distress.”

In our darkest moments, it is vital to remember that if we keep the faith and finish the race, we, too, will survive any time of great distress in our lives. How do we do this? By being submissive to the will of the Father, to be humble of heart, to be steadfast in prayer, and to put our possessions in perspective.

And let us remember that life here is Act One of a two-act play. The Second Act is eternal life. Let us pray to all the saints in Heaven to toss us a life-line, and to live by their example and divine aid. AMEN!