

From the Homily Library of Fr. Callistus Iyorembor

Solemnity of All Saints – November 1, 2020

Brothers and Sisters,

This year November 1 - All Saints Day - falls on a Sunday. It gives us the opportunity to reflect on this wonderful feast day. The Feast of All Saints is an important one because:

First, we celebrate not just those officially canonized/officially recognized saints but also the ordinary people whom we have forgotten in history but whom God remembers having been saintly.

Second, reflect on God's universal call to holiness; our call to sanctity. God invites us individually, personally to sanctity. We hear that in his words: *"Be Holy as your Heavenly Father is Holy."* 1Peter 1:16 and furthermore: *"You are a Royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people set apart to proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His own wonderful light."* 1Peter 2:9

All of us - by the virtue of our baptism - are the Holy nation, a people set apart. God has called us out of darkness into His wonderful light. Candles are lit every day we celebrate Mass to remind us that we are a people called out of darkness into God's wonderful light. Sometimes when we really want to emphasize that theology, we light the big candle. One thing the Saints had in common was their sanctity. The Saints were people of light. so, we will be reflecting today on what it means to be a saint.

Notice that being a saint is the ordinary goal of Christian life. Everything in the Church - the preaching, the sacrament, scripture, Eucharist, the prayers - are meant to help us become saints. What does it mean to be Holy/Saint? Well today's Gospel gives us a template for pursuing holiness, for becoming a saint. Jesus goes up the mountain and - from that vantage point - He begins His teaching: the Beatitudes.

Blessed are the clean of heart.

To be clean of heart is to desire one thing, not many things. To be a saint is to be clean of heart. To be clean of heart is to desire one thing: being focused on God and doing His will. Ask yourself what your mind is focused on. Prov 4:23 *“Above all else guard your heart; for everything you do flows from it.”*

Blessed are the merciful.

“Do unto no man what you would not want them to do to you.” God is merciful. This is what He did for us as He hung on the cross. And so, He wants us to enter into the suffering of others. We become saints in the measure we make room for other people. Jesus left us an example of mercy when He prayed for His executioners. Sanctity resides in becoming a source/channel of God’s mercy for others.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

To be a saint is doing the right thing, being the right person that God created you to be. We make a decision every day we wake up that we will pursue righteousness; that we will choose the ways of love, forgiveness of our enemies, kindness, respect for other people’s political views. We denounce being critical and judgmental of other people. We choose to spend quality time with the Lord and His word. This is what it means to hunger and thirst after righteousness. And it is what true sanctity entails. The saints were indeed people who towed this path.

Blessed are the peace makers, they shall be called children of God.

Friends, when Jesus rose from the dead, after His brutal crucifixion, His first words to His disciples were shalom; PEACE. We become saints when we promote peace everywhere we go. When we avoid gossip speaking behind people’s back. When we are

open to saying words like "I am sorry; it was my fault." What the saints had in common was they were peace-loving people. Sanctity resides in being a peace-loving people.

To be a saint is to live out these Beatitudes.

Communion of Saints

There is an important component to our celebration today and that is the importance of asking the intercession of the Saints. We are running a race toward God, toward heaven, our true home. The saints are like people who have run the marathon and have reached the finish line. They are cheering us who are still running: Go! Go!! Go!!! They cannot run our race for us but they are interceding for us. They are on our side.

Mary is first in the hierarchy of Saints because she said 'Yes' to God: "*Let it be done to me according to your will.*" We will seek her intercession. During Mass I love to ask the intercession of Mary, then St. Joseph, Mary' spouse, St. Thomas patron saint of our Parish. Then I ask St. Anthony and St. Jude not just because our parish is associated with them, but also because God has worked miracles for me through the intercession of Sts. Jude and Anthony. Every one of you must have a Saint with whom you identify.