

**Today we celebrate the Feast of All Saints. This feast gives us an occasion to thank God for having invited so many of our ancestors to join the company of saints. 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, men, women and children united with God in heavenly glory, whose feasts we do not celebrate. Among these would be our own parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters who were heroic men and women of faith and are now with God in heaven.**

**A veil of mystery hides what lies in store for human beings beyond this mortal life here and now. St. Paul recognizes this fact when he says that “No eye has seen, no ear has heard nor has it entered the human heart to imagine what God has prepared for those who love him.” The Scriptures provide a wealth of hopeful images to give a foretaste of what lies in store beyond this world, for those who love God.**

**Those in heaven are no plaster saints, no gloomy killjoys but a glorious band of decent people who lived with such love, they went straight back to the God they loved so well. They went “marching in” - happy to be meeting face to face with the One who always held them in the palm of His hand.**

**One thing that strikes you first about the Saints is their diversity. It would be very difficult to find one pattern of holiness, one way**

of following Christ. There is Thomas Aquinas, the towering intellectual, and John Vianney (the Cure d'Ars), who barely made it through the seminary. There is Vincent de Paul, a saint in the city, and there is Anthony who found sanctity in the harshness and loneliness of the desert. There is Bernard kneeling on the hard stones of Clavaux in penance for his sins. There is Peter, the hard-nosed and no-nonsense fisherman. There is Joan of Arc, leading armies into war who was burned as a witch.

How do we explain this diversity? God is an artist, and artists love to change their styles. The saints are God's masterpieces, and He never tires of painting them in different colors, different styles, and different compositions. What does this mean to us? It means we should not try to imitate one Saint exactly. Look to them all, study their unique holiness, but then find that specific color God wants to bear through you. St. Catherine of Siena was right: "Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire."

"A great multitude that no one could count", as our first reading from the Book of Revelation tells us - because God is rich in mercy, and in the Father's house there are many mansions. There's a place there for all of us, and the surest way to claim of those many mansions is to "the Way, the Truth and the Life." Jesus shows us how to be the best people we can be, and the qualities He wants to see in us, His followers. A quick focus on those qualities, which the Beatitudes in our Gospel reading shows us and that they are the very opposite of common and accepted standards and values.

The world says, Blessed are the rich, because they can have

**everything they want. But Jesus says, Blessed are the poor in Spirit. By poor in Spirit He means those who put their trust in God rather than money; and those who admit that it is not their income, possessions or bank account that makes them rich in the eyes of God, but what kind of people they are.**

**The world says, Blessed are those who live it up, and never stop having fun. But Jesus says, Blessed are they who mourn. He means those who let themselves feel the misfortune, pain and sorrow of others, and who respond to them with understanding, sympathy, kindness, compassion, and practical assistance.**

**The world says, Blessed are the assertive that talk tough and act tough. But Jesus says, Blessed are the gentle. Gentleness is not weakness, but a form of strength. St. Francis de Sales used to say that you can catch more flies with a spoon full of sugar than a barrel full of vinegar. In Jesus book there is no place for bullies and bullying.**

**The world says, Blessed are those who hunger for power, status, and fame. Jesus says, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for what is right. The only power and status we really need is to keep living in God's way and to keep doing the right thing. More satisfaction and contentment will be found in living with a good conscience than in hanging out with the movers and shakers and wannabes of this world.**

**The world says, Happy are those with clean fingernails, sparkling eyes, gleaming teeth, and unblemished skin. But Jesus says, Blessed are those with clean hearts. It's from the heart that all our thoughts, words and actions flow. If the heart is clean, then everything that flows from it will be clean, as clean as water**

**flowing from an unpolluted spring.**

**The world says, Blessed are those who show no mercy and who take no prisoners. But Jesus says, Blessed are the merciful. Happy are those who make allowances for the faults of others, and whose greatness lies in their ability to forgive. They will receive mercy and forgiveness from God for their own sins.**

**The world says, Blessed are those who get even and exact revenge. But Jesus says, Blessed are the peacemakers. Happy are those who spread understanding among people, those who welcome strangers, and those who work for a more just and equal society. They are truly the children of God.**

**The world says, Blessed are those who lie and cheat and get away with it. But Jesus says, Blessed are those who make a stand for what is right and true. They may suffer for their stand, but the wounds they bear will be marks of honor and integrity. Jesus practised what He preached. In His own person he was the beatitudes. Living them day after day made Him the thoroughly good person He was. It's the same for us too.**

**Today's feast is not about the canonized saints but about all the good and holy people who have ever lived. None of us, I feel sure, is expecting to be a canonized saint. We don't fantasize that one day some pope will declare what saints we were. We don't expect that our picture is going to be revered on the walls of churches. Not for a moment do we imagine anyone saying prayers to us or preserving pieces of us as relics. But in its document on the Church, the Second Vatican Council wrote a chapter called "The Universal Call to Holiness." So our feast day today is reminding us that Jesus Christ can and will**

**empower us to practice what He preached and to live what we believe. Surely, then, we won't ever want to stop receiving Him as our "Bread of Life" in Holy Communion. Each of us is already implanted with the Spirit and the grace of God. The main thing that can prevent us from living by the power of God's grace is not being aware that we have it. We are all children of God, not later when we die, but now, at this very moment and all through our lives.**