

Every ten years, the US Bureau of the Census tries its best to count every man, woman, and child in the United States. Our 1<sup>st</sup> Reading from the book of Revelation speaks of the seal being placed on the foreheads of 144,000. This is meant to be a symbolic number. Israel had 12 tribes. If we multiply that by 12 again, then by a thousand, we arrive at a symbolic number representing the new Israel. 144,000 thus represents all Christians and embraces people from every nation, race, people, and tongue. After the vision of 144,000, John sees a great multitude which neither he nor anyone else can count all wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.

The Census results inform decisions about allocating hundreds of billions of dollars in federal funding to communities across the country and five U.S. territories. Our reading from the Book of Revelation is meant to inform our decisions as Christians. How do we allocate our time, talent, and treasure to build up the Kingdom of God?

Our loving God, the Creator, brings us into being so that we may love him and serve him. As Christians we are sealed on the forehead at our baptism by the sign of the cross traced by parents and godparents. Baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the priest pours water over our forehead so that we become a new creation in Christ. An indelible and invisible mark is placed on our souls. We wear a white robe symbolizing on the outside the purity of our souls with all sin forgiven including the cleansing of original sin. We are anointed with sacred Chrism on the crown of the head and reminded of how we are to allocate our time, talent, and treasures. We are called as priests, prophets, and kings to live our faith fully. And with the seal of baptism, we receive a royal inheritance to be counted among the multitude in heaven after a life well lived.

On many days throughout the year, we celebrate the memorial of a specific saint:

- Oct 1<sup>st</sup>, Saint Therese of Lisieux, Patroness of the Diocese of Fairbanks, a young woman on fire with the love of Christ who vowed to spend eternity showering roses upon earth.
- Oct 4<sup>th</sup>, Saint Francis of Assisi, the founder of the Franciscans who helped to rebuild the church by following the call to holiness in a life of austere poverty that attracted others to Christ.
- Oct 15<sup>th</sup>, the Carmelite reformer Saint Teresa of Avila who worked with Saint John of the Cross to call the Carmelites back to a life of prayer and poverty.
- Oct 18<sup>th</sup>, Saint Luke, the Evangelist and author of the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles.
- Oct 22<sup>nd</sup>, Saint John Paul II, who in his 26 years as Pope canonized 482 saints to demonstrate to the world that saints come from every nation, race, people, and tongue.

I often liken the canonized saints to the Hall of Fame. There are a select number of baseball players whose memory is enshrined in Cooperstown, New York... but so many more have played the game. In addition to professional, college, and semiprofessional ball players, there are children and youth from nations around the world who enjoy playing the sport. Canonized saints are important. They help us to dream of what is possible the same way a hall of famer inspires the young to play ball.

November 1<sup>st</sup> is All Saints Day. Instead of recognizing one canonized saint, we recognize all who have reached the Promised Land of Eternity and are present in heaven with our loving God.

Let's remember those who served with pride  
Though now in heaven they abide.  
Let us rejoice with prayerful mind,  
For the legacy of freedom they left behind.

To our honored heroes, who in heaven awake,  
Let their treasured memory be our keepsake.  
May tears of joy – not of weeping  
Be ours in knowing they're in God's keeping.  
(Heavens Hall of Fame 2005, EMT).

In recognizing the great multitude for All Saints Day, we are reminded of God's love and mercy. He brings us into being with a purpose and that ultimate purpose is to spend eternity in the presence of God. Let us therefor live lives worthy of our calling.

With the beatitudes, Jesus gives us concrete examples of how to live our lives as saints in the making:

- Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, those who set pride aside to listen and humbly follow Jesus.
- Reach out with compassion to comfort the grieving. Recognize others who are suffering and respond to their needs.
- Be detached from the material things of this world.
- Work for social justice that there may be peace in our time.
- Forgive others as God has forgiven you.
- Respect others seeing their innate human dignity and love them as you love God.
- Settle differences, defuse tensions, reconcile disputes. Be a peacemaker.
- Jesus was persecuted for the sake of righteousness. Pick up your cross and follow him.
- People will attack you for doing good. Serve Jesus and do the right thing.

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven” (Mt 5:12a).

In celebrating All Saints, we recognize our loved ones who have died before us marked by the signs of faith. A grandmother, a great uncle, a generous neighbor, and those known but to God alone who have already been welcomed into the Kingdom of Heaven. And for those who are almost there but not yet, we have All Souls Day, November 2nd, the Day of the Dead, when we pray for those in purgatory to be set free from their way station to enter the gates of Paradise. “Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face” (Ps 24:6).