

## Solemnity of All Saints----Sisters of St. Joseph

November 1, 2016 9:30 a.m. Holy Family Chapel

While I'm always glad to be with you for various important occasions and significant liturgical celebrations, I'm particularly glad when I'm able to be with you for this beautiful Holy Day celebrating All the Saints. The Opening Rite with the singing of the Litany of the Saints as we processed in to begin the Mass is always very moving, and it helps me, and I'm sure all of us, to really focus on the meaning of this Feast.

Of course, God's Word helps us to do that as well----The beautiful Scripture Readings we've just heard proclaimed for this Solemn Feast put God's Finger right on it!----Interestingly two of those Readings were authored by St. John, the "Beloved of Jesus", who had the most personal insight into Jesus of all the Apostles.

In the First Reading from the Book of Revelation, we heard of the beautiful vision John had of the end times when there would be this huge crowd of people from every land, race and nation, too numerous to count, but that symbolic number of 144,000 assigned as a kind of "infinite" or limitless number. And they were identified as "*the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb!*" We have come to refer to that "huge crowd of witnesses" as the Communion of the Saints. We don't know them all by name, as we do with certain of the better known, and officially scrutinized Saints canonized by the Church; but they are the ones who we know/believe have passed from this life and live with God forever in glory in Heaven. This crowd includes many of our own family members, relatives, friends, Sisters, and fellow pilgrims who have preceded us along the way.

And of course, what can be clearer than what we heard in today's Second Reading from John's first Letter. We know that God loves us, and that we are God's children now. But as St. John says: "*What we shall be has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is revealed we shall be like Him.*" So first of all, we need to be absolutely sure about our current identity: that we are sons and daughters of God, and therefore, we are sisters and brothers in Christ of one another. It's all about "knowing who we are"----who we really are at the very core of our true selves----it's about our spiritual identity in relation to Jesus, our Savior!

Those people St. John was talking about in the Book of Revelation----the ones we lump together into the category of All Saints----finally came to realize “who they were”; they came to realize that they had become like God.

But no one knows how long that process of coming to an understanding and appreciation of our spiritual identity takes any one of us during our lifetime. Some people, whom we might identify as “holy” or “saintly”, may have been that way all their lives; others might have come to that place in their lives as a result of a conversion that changed them dramatically, maybe even later on in life. But at some point, they began living a life of holiness, and lived that holiness faithfully throughout their lives.

We should know something about that, right? Those of us here who have not only received the new life of Jesus through the Sacrament of Baptism, but at a time in our lives----very long ago when we were much younger----we chose to dedicate our lives to God-----as Sisters of St. Joseph, or as a Priest of Jesus Christ. But, even that doesn't guarantee that we automatically become holy. Each and every one of us knows that from our own personal experience. It's a life-long process. And it's a process that I'm sure we're all still going through; I know that I certainly am.

That's where today's Gospel comes into play. Jesus tells us what it takes for us to live in the Kingdom of God that He has already established here on earth, and how it is that, as His followers, we can help to keep building on and furthering that Kingdom; we do that by being People who live the Beatitudes. Just because we're a sister or a priest or a bishop doesn't guarantee us anything; we have to choose to be people who pursue Jesus----who have as our goal to live like Jesus---who choose to follow in Jesus' footsteps.

And so Jesus tells us that those who sorrow will be comforted; the merciful will receive mercy; the meek will receive the promised Land of God's Kingdom; those who hunger and thirst for righteousness---not just support it or work for it or write letters about it----but who actually hunger and thirst after it---will be satisfied. The clean of heart will be able to see God because they're not blinded or distracted by anything or anyone else. The peacemakers will be able to take pride in being children of God. And that list of course begins with those who are poor in spirit.....the category which takes all the others in.

During this Year of Mercy which is coming to an end very soon, we have been focusing on God's Mercy, but also on how we, as followers of Jesus and as sons and daughters of God, are

also called to be “agents of Mercy”. That is one of the most concrete ways that we can validate our spiritual identity as a follower of Jesus---if we are truly being “agents of Mercy” to those with whom we live; if we are being those who take the initiative to break down any walls of misunderstanding.

Last night I was at St. Joseph in White Pigeon, where Sr. Maxine has all but been canonized, and where so many of your dear Sisters are held in such esteem. I was there to bless a new Rosary Garden that had been constructed by a boy from the parish who is also a Boy Scout and used this as his Eagle Scout project. He got a number of his fellow Boy Scouts to help him, and had the local K of C support the project. The result is a beautiful addition to the parish grounds which he said was his way of giving back to the parish for the wonderful gift of faith he has been given. Sr. Maxine would be proud!

That project took a lot of hard work. But so does anything that is worthwhile, including our spiritual pilgrimage of faith. It's the hard work----it's the witnessing to Jesus----it's being merciful and living the other beatitudes that results in that kind of “identity” or recognition.

It's important to know that God doesn't love us because we're so good, but because He is all good ---- all-loving---all-merciful. And that's what we must imitate----that is the identity that we must develop. The Beatitudes are not necessarily about projects; they're not even action-oriented. They are all about our spiritual attitudes. How do we see life? How do we see one another? How do we see ourselves?

Today's Psalm Refrain is one of the most beautiful of all: “*Lord this is the people who long to see your Face....*” That's us. That has to be our “attitude”----a Longing for God----a Hunger for all that God wants to see happen----a Thirst for goodness.....

When Jesus tells us “our reward will be great in heaven”, it's not a “carrot on the end of the stick” incentive; no, it's just telling us the fact---what is. When we live as God invites us to live---and help build God's Kingdom---Jesus promises that we will know the reward of seeing as God sees, of being “like Him”, and that is what will completely fulfill us for all eternity.

God bless you, now and always!