FATHER MARK SCHULTE
HOMILY
ALL SAINTS (Thirty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time) (A)
NOVEMBER 1, 2026

"Church as Mystical Body"

Brothers and sisters, today we celebrate the Feast of All Saints. It is not often that this Holy Day of Obligation falls on a Sunday, but when it does, we are obliged to observe it. The Feast of All Saints or "All Saints Day", as it is commonly referred to, calls the faithful to contemplate and honor all those Holy Souls who are now enjoying the beatific vision of God in Heaven. We hear this described in our first reading taken from the book of Revelation. These are the souls that have the seal of the living God on their foreheads indicating that they belong to Him. They are dressed in long white robes meaning that they have been purified, washed in the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ and have won for themselves the right to be in His presence. We refer to them as saints, which means that they are holy. The numbers are symbolic. One hundred and forty-four thousand simply means there are many saints in Heaven. Twelve thousand from each tribe of Israel. Bear in mind that the Church is the New Israel (*), and the numbers represent all the baptized who have died in the state of grace from every land and people throughout the world, because the Church is universal (Rev 7:2-14).

A few of these saints we know by name. We celebrate their individual feast days throughout the year in the Church's calendar. A few are mentioned specifically in each Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. But today's feast day is primarily about celebrating all the saints in heaven that we don't know by name, but God does. Some of them could be our friends and relatives.

The Church reminds us that these saints are available to aid us in our spiritual struggles while here on earth. They are there to help intercede on our behalf. All of them are there to help us, but some we are more familiar with because they are associated with specific needs. St. Joseph is the patron saint of fathers, families and the Church. St. Michael the Archangel defends us in our spiritual battle, St. Anthony for lost items, St. Christopher for those traveling. Many saints are associated with health needs and so on. The saints are always at hand to help us, and this is their special day.

Many people secularize this day and simply turn it into a holiday of parties and such. They are only familiar with what is known as Halloween. Halloween is a purely secular holiday bearing no similarities with the true spiritual meaning of this day. Exorcists tell us that Halloween is a special day for the devil and his demons, as well as for witches, warlocks, black masses, and occult rituals. The Church reminds us that we should remain far separated from anything that even remotely resembles satanic or occult practices (CCC 2115-2117). Devil and demon costumes are not as innocent as some people make them out to be. If children participate in festivities associated with this holiday, it should be with a knowledge of what All Saints Day is all about. They can imitate their favorite saints by wearing a saint's costume. It is sometimes asked what the age range is for a child to participate in Halloween activities. Generally speaking, it should be no older than around the age of six years old. It is around that age that a child is preparing for sacraments, and his focus should be on learning his faith rather than on

the fantasy world of ghosts and goblins. A six-year-old boy is already learning the rudiment of his father's trade and helping out the family. Scripture tells us "When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (1Cor 15:11). In addition what does it say about a culture that goes all out to decorate its homes with skeletons and demons more than it decorates for Christmas?

In the Gospel, Jesus has given us the blueprint for a saintly life and entry into His Heavenly Kingdom. We call this blueprint the Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12) (CCC 1716-1717). The faithful strive on a daily basis to acquire these spiritual qualities and characteristics. "Blessed are the poor in spirit… the sorrowing… the lowly… those who hunger and thirst for holiness… those who show mercy… the single hearted… the clean of heart… the peace makers… those who are persecuted for being holy and a follower of Jesus Christ." The saints had all of these qualities. We pray to them asking them to assist us in acquiring these qualities for ourselves.

The Church, the mystical body of Christ is comprised of the saints in heaven. It is these that we celebrate today on All Saints Day. It is also comprised of the souls who are now in Purgatory undergoing their final purification before entering into Heaven (CCC 954). It is these that we remember on "All Souls Day", November 2. It is not for us to judge which souls are now in Heaven, only God knows this (CCC 1861). Therefore, we continue to pray for our deceased friends and relatives, assisting them with our prayers, thus shortening their stay in purgatory (CCC 1031, 1472). These prayers are offered in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, during our rosary prayers and other prayers (CCC 946-959).

Once again, the Church is comprised of three main segments or "states":

- The Church Triumphant are the souls now in heaven.
- The Church Suffering are the souls undergoing purification in purgatory.
- The Church Militant are all the baptized souls undergoing the spiritual battle while still on this earth.

It is very appropriate to visit our local cemeteries on All Souls Day and offer prayers for the dead, while at the same time requesting their prayers on our behalf, as we continue to undergo our own spiritual struggle while on earth in this "vale of tears" (Ps 84:6), (*Salve Regina* prayer*)*.

Holy Souls – Pray for us (CCC 1474-1477).

(*) (Vatican II; *Lumen Gentium,* ch. II, par. 9). (*Ad Gentes*, par.5).

CCC = Catechism of the Catholic Church