

HOMILY FOR ALL SAINTS SUNDAY.

REVELATION 7:2-4, 9-14, PSALM 24:1b, 5-6, 1 JOHN 3:1-3, MATTHEW 5:1-12a.



THE SAINTS GIVE US A MODEL OF HOLINESS SO THAT WE MIGHT ALSO PRAISE GOD FOR ALL ETERNITY.

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, today we celebrate the feast of the Sanctified Brethren— all the saints, the great men, women, and children, the faithful in Christ who have been declared by the church and are commemorated in the Church's liturgy. Still, also all who are alive and those who have died with the seal of faith and now possess God as He really is (1 John 3:2), and are shining with Him for all eternity. They belong to the multitude too great to be numbered from all tribes, nations, and peoples and tongues (Revelation 7:9).



The saints we celebrate are people we may have known or never known while they were on earth, or people we know and currently live with: family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and colleagues. When St. Paul wrote his first letter to the Christian community in Corinth, he began: "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle, to you who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be saints."(1 Corinthians 1:1-2). To the Christians in Ephesus, he wrote: "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to all the Saints who are at Ephesus." (Ephesians 1:1-2). In his great Epistle to the Romans, he spoke the same language: "To all God's beloved who are in Rome, called to be saints." (Romans 1:7).

Beloved friends, Paul is not writing letters to the dead. He is addressing the living, those who have committed themselves to following the way of Christ in the world. For Paul, those who live that life are sanctified Brethren; they are saints. That is the life all of us have pledged ourselves to follow. And when we celebrate the feast of All Saints, we are not celebrating aliens from another planet; we are celebrating our own folks, everyone whose life is a witness to the love of Christ.

In today's Gospel, we have Jesus' charter for His kingdom: the beatitudes, a list of qualities that characterize the sanctified brethren (the Saints). When we listen, we can all put faces to the virtues. We remember these people, and we know them. The people whose simplicity and littleness shine like a light in a world of darkness. The gentle folks whose energetic non-violence will never win medals. Those who cry and

mourn their loss because they have tasted the presence of love. The ones who hunger for what is right and who stay hungry until what is right becomes a reality. Those who scandalize us with their mercy because they exclude no one from its embrace.

The people who have an undivided heart, whose loyalty to God is never in question. Those who not only look for peace but do everything in their power to make peace and build a kingdom among the ruins. The faithful who are not fair-weather Christians but who suffer persecution for the sake of the kingdom, and who still manage to smile at their persecutors. Those who are snarled at for their beliefs and who meet abuse with a blessing, who sing of the Lord for their captors.

These people are among us. They are the same as the saints that Paul addressed, the faithful of Jesus Christ. They are real people whose stories may never be told and whose goodness may never be celebrated. We celebrate them today, and we bless them in the name of the Lord.



The kingdom of God is not populated by robots programmed to perform as their designer planned. The kingdom is populated by those who have gone before us, and those among us who live gospel lives. Goodness is not limited to any age of history: neither the past nor the present has a monopoly on saints. We belong to a community that has a history of goodness and fidelity to the Gospel. We are related to those who went before us, those who linked their belief to those who went before them. We are part of the chain of loneliness.

Beloved friends, like the saints, we are not completely immune from temptation or sin, but we cannot allow sin to have dominion over us; rather, we rise above its subjugation to the life of holiness through the transforming grace of the Holy Spirit. In us all, the words of Proverbs are literally fulfilled each day: "Even if the righteous falls seven times, they will rise again (Proverbs 24:16). By so doing, we can all join in the song as we long to be with the saints on the last day:

"Oh, when the Saints go marching in,
Oh, when the saints go marching in,
Oh, Lord, I want to be in that number, when the Saints go marching in."



PLACE BE WITH YOU!

