

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS OCT 31, 2020

VIGIL MASS ON HALLOWEEN

1st Reading: Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14 - *I had a vision of a great multitude...*

from every nation, race, people & tongue.

Responsorial Psalm 24 "Lord, this is the people that longs to see your face."

2nd Reading: 1 John 3:1-3 – *Beloved, we are God's children now ... one day we shall see God as God is.*

Gospel: Matthew 5:1-16 - *You are the light of the world.*

♪♪ **Blest are they, the poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of God.**

Blest are they, full of sorrow, they shall be consoled.

REJOICE AND BE GLAD! BLESSED ARE YOU, HOLY ARE YOU.

REJOICE AND BE GLAD! YOURS IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD! ♪♪

Today & tomorrow we are celebrating the Feast of All Saints. It's such an important feast that the readings are different from the usual Sunday cycle we've been hearing. That's why the Gospel today is the Beatitudes, the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. They are the headline of the Gospel, a summary of the Good News preached & lived by Jesus. We heard the 1st two in the song I began with.

The Be-attitudes are the attitudes of Jesus, they describe the way he lived. The ones who imitate those attitudes are the saints. There are a lot of them on the Church calendar, & even more who just live the Gospel "*from every race, tribe, nation & language*", to quote a line from the 1st reading. Many more than 144,000. That number is symbolic, by the way. The 12 tribes of Israel times the 12 apostles times 1,000. As it says in the next verse from the 1st reading, They are "*a great multitude, which no one could count.*" [a bazillion, as Sr. Anna would say] The fact that there are so many saints in our tradition helps us understand that every one of us can see ourselves - our best selves - in one of the saints, in someone who is an example of what a follower of Christ looks like.

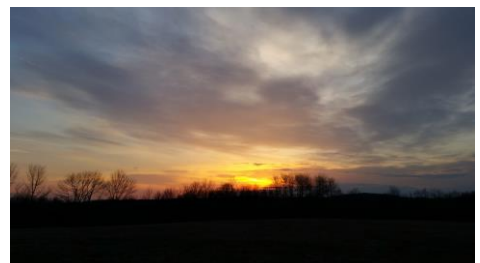
But many families and children are not thinking about saints today, they are celebrating *Halloween*. Did you know that the day started out as a festival celebrated by people who followed nature religions long before Christ was born. [Samhain in Celtic tradition] It was connected with the change of the seasons.

The end of October was the beginning of Winter for many tribes. In 835, the Church saw it as an opportunity to proclaim the Good News of the Life of Christ using the popular language and images of ordinary people. **It was in that year that the feast of All Saints was moved from May 13th to November 1st.** And that's when the day became "**Halloween**" or "All Hallows Eve," the eve of the feast of the holy ones, the saints.

The Church has always understood that we can affect the world around us by our faith, just as the culture affects our experience of God & how we express it. The Spirit of Christ in the Church did not condemn this ancient festival, it transformed it by making it the vigil of two feasts - first All Saints Day and then All Souls day, November 2nd [which was added in 1048].

The Good news is that the **Light** of Christ is more powerful than darkness, and the **Life** of Christ is more powerful than death: that evil is overcome by good. We don't have to abandon the celebration of Halloween, it is a fact of life in our culture. But the Gospel truth is that we are **IN** the world

but not **OF** the world.



The song we began with celebrates the truth that we can be poor and powerless, and that we sometimes mourn and grieve while we are in the world, but that we can always rejoice and be glad because we are already part of the Kingdom of God, sometimes understood as the KIN-dom of God. We are children of God now - as the 2nd reading puts it - and sisters & brothers, kin, to one another. We need to remember that when we feel powerless over a pandemic & are blown around by the partisan winds of politics.

Being powerless is not the same as being helpless. Many who want to manipulate others try to make them feel helpless. But to be powerless can be an open door to the power of God at work in a community of disciples. It is a first step, not only for members of a 12 step group but for anyone who can be honest enough to admit their need for a higher power and humble enough to look beyond themselves in faith and hope.

So today the Spirit asks us a Gospel question: What do you rejoice in? Who do you rejoice in? What attitudes run your life? The images of Halloween are often images of fear, death and violence. These realities are all too common in Halloween also includes the image of that shines out from inside the carved midst of darkness. Jesus calls us to who sent him as our savior to free us



our everyday experience. But the Jack-O-Lantern, with a light pumpkin. A symbol of hope in the rejoice in the love & care of a God from fear, death and oppression.

Today we recall that we believe in the communion of saints, an article of the creed. We trust in our connection with those who have confronted sin, violence and fear and still lived the beatitudes.

By accepting Baptism and coming together for Eucharist, we have promised to live the beatitudes. We have promised to go beyond the 10 commandments, the minimum standard for civilization.

The problem is - the beatitudes describe a way of life that is impossible to live perfectly. The saints are the ones who knew they couldn't even begin to live that way - without the grace of God and without each other. They became holy because they admitted they were not perfect. In fact, they lived what some have called a *spirituality of imperfection*.

The spirituality of imperfection is a little like Baseball. In baseball, a 300 hitter is someone who makes an out 7 out of 10 times, and very often goes to the Hall of Fame. Errors are expected to be a part of the game. I've been following the World Series and enjoyed it, but the play has been far from perfect.

In my youth, I wanted to be perfect in many ways, but never achieved it. That may have been one of the reasons I became a priest. I've come to accept that I'll never be perfect, so now I consider myself to be a *recovering* perfectionist, depending more and more on God's grace and the love of others. A saint is not a perfectionist - [One of my Friar friends describe a perfectionist as someone who takes infinite pains with everything and then passes that pain on to everyone else.] The perfectionists in the New Testament were called Pharisees.

Today we celebrate our own call to be holy, not perfect. Our call to be part of a communion of saints. The beatitudes are a call to repent of pretending to be perfect & in control & to begin to be holy. In the words of a song by Bon Jovi, composed in the midst of this pandemic, "When you can't do what you do, You do what you can."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBLAamlxy8> with Jennifer Nettles].

A saint is someone like Fr. Mychal Judge, the Franciscan chaplain who died while ministering to firefighters on Sept. 11, 2001 when the twin towers collapsed in NYC. He was someone who, like Francis of Assisi, admitted his need for God & for the support of brothers and sisters. He was poor in spirit.

A saint is someone like Thérèse of Liseaux, who was so pure of heart that she could see God's way of love so clearly that she could see the way God sees.

A saint is someone like Martin Luther King Jr. or someone like John Lewis, who mourned for those who have died by violence & grieved over the fact that too often, the only way we respond to violence is by more violence.

A saint is someone like Edith Stein, who rejoiced in faith even when she was persecuted for being born a Jew and entered the fullness of God's kingdom when she was executed by the Nazis.

A saint is someone like Pope Francis who celebrates the Mercy of God and calls us to treat **all** men & women as members of God's family.

A saint is someone like Ghandi who hungered and thirsted for justice, and successfully changed a whole society without going to war, someone who was a true peacemaker who resisted evil in a nonviolent way.

We are **all** called to be saints, we are called to hold the beatitudes up to our lives as a mirror - To admit that we cannot even attempt to live them without God's help & the support of one another. We are called to believe that God can accomplish in us what we cannot do by our own strength. We are called to live the spirituality of the Beatitudes.



♪♪ Blest are they who seek peace; they are the children of God.
Blest are they who suffer in faith, the glory of God is theirs.
REJOICE AND BE GLAD! BLESSED ARE YOU, HOLY ARE YOU.
REJOICE AND BE GLAD! YOURS IS THE KINGDOM OF GOD! ♪♪

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1w3-jVKsqto> Video of Readings & homily, Friar Peter
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1RnljrIrcds> Video, Creed to Communion

1st Reading: Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

I, John, saw another angel coming up from the east with the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels to whom God had given the power to damage the earth & the sea.

The angel said, “Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees, until we mark the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads.”

And I was told that the number of those who were marked with God's seal on their foreheads was **144,000**. They were from the twelve tribes of Israel.

After this I looked, & there was an enormous crowd - no one could count all the people! They were from every race, tribe, nation & language & they stood in front of the throne of the Lamb, dressed in long white robes and holding palm branches in their hands.

They called out in a loud voice:

“Salvation comes from our God, who sits on the throne, and from the Lamb!”

All the angels stood around the throne, the elders and the four living creatures. Then they threw themselves face downward in front of the throne and worshiped God, saying:

**“Amen! / Praise, glory, wisdom, / thanksgiving, honor, power and might
belong to our God / forever and ever! Amen!”**

2nd reading: 1 John 3:1-3

Beloved, See how much the Father has loved us!

God's love is so great that we are called the children of God -

and so, in fact, we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it has not known God.

My dear friends, We are God's children now,

it is not yet clear what we shall become. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall become like him because we shall see him as he really is.

Everyone who has this hope in Christ remains pure, just as Christ is pure.

Gospel Matthew 5:1-12a The Beatitudes

When Jesus saw the crowds he went up on the mountainside. After he had sat down his disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, the reign of God is theirs.

Blessed are they who mourn, then shall be consoled.

Blessed are the meek, the gentle, they shall inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for holiness, they shall be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure of heart, the single hearted, they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, they shall be called the sons and daughters of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for holiness' sake,
the reign of God is theirs.

Blest are you when they insult you and persecute you
and utter every kind of slander against you because of me.

Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is great in heaven;
they persecuted the prophets before you in the very same way.