Homily of All Saints, 2026

Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14; Psalm 24:16, 1 John 3:1-3; Matthew 5:1-12

The Catholic Church believes and teaches that the Church exists simultaneously in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory. The Church in heaven is called Church Triumphant; the Church on earth is called Church Militant; and the Church in purgatory is called Church Suffering.

Almost every day, we celebrate feasts of canonized saints. But today, we celebrate all the saints in heaven. The first reading informs us that there are multitudes of uncanonized saints. St. John saw "a vision of heaven, and of a great multitude, which no one can count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue" (Revelation 7:9). Indeed, our ancestors and loved ones who have gone before us, who will never be canonized, are in heaven are included. I do not know if anyone of us imagine himself or herself of being canonized, but all of us are journeying to heaven.

There are people who do not believe in the power of the saints to intercede for us. How do such people explain the mystery behind the countless prayers God answered through the intercession of the saints? Ordinarily, we believe in the power of prayer by our fellow human beings, which is why we ask for prayers from one another. If God hears the prayer of sinners on earth, even more he hears the prayers of the saints in his presence. Therefore, it is not out of place to also seek the intercession of our departed loved ones and our ancestors who lived a godly life.

Among many African peoples, the belief in the power of intercession by dead good people existed before the coming of Christianity. Such belief cannot be dismissed as a pagan practice and meaningless. Communion with the saints was not a new teaching to the people who observed communion with their ancestors.

The Catholic Church does not discourage us from bearing our native names. However, the Church teaches that we include saints' names for Baptism and Confirmation. In addition to interceding for us, the saints are our models for imitation. St. Ignatius wrote how he was influenced by the lives of St. Dominic and St. Francis. He said, "St. Dominic did this; I, too, will do it. St. Francis did this; therefore, I will do it." And he did it!

The Church Militant is a Pilgrim Church. Our destination is the Church Triumphant. We are pilgrims of hope. Therefore, we are invited to live in such a way that brings us to the Church Triumphant in heaven. The second reading says, "Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself [herself] pure, as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).

Today's gospel is a roadmap to heaven. The beatitudes guide us on our faith and life journey. How wonderful our world can become if our leaders and our rulers and indeed everyone are guided by the beatitudes?

"Blessed are the poor in spirit;" is an invitation to humility.

"Blessed are they who mourn;" is an invitation to repentance.

"Blessed are the meek;" is an invitation to kindness.

"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness;" is an invitation to truth and justice.

"Blessed are the merciful;" is an invitation to compassion.

"Blessed are the clean of heart;" is an invitation to honesty.

"Blessed are the peacemakers;" is an invitation to peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

"Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely;" is an invitation to steadfastness, resilience, and firmness.

St. Theresa of Lisieux advises that to become a saint, or to go to heaven, is not only achieved by doing extraordinary and mighty deeds, but also by doing small things with great love. She calls this "the simple way: a simple and direct path to heaven." Jesus says, "The person who is trustworthy in very small matters is also trustworthy in great ones. …" (Luke 16:10). He also says, "… the kingdom of God … is like a mustard seed that a person took and planted in the garden. When it was fully grown, it became a large bush and the birds of the sky dwelt in its branches" (Luke 13:18).

Miriam C. Hunter writes, "Why are the saints, saints? Because they were cheerful when it was difficult to be cheerful; patient when it was difficult to be patient. And because they pushed on when they wanted to stand still and kept silent when they wanted to talk. And because they were agreeable when they wanted to be disagreeable…" We can also add that they forgave when it was difficult to forgive and lived their life in total surrender to God's will.

The Bible and the Church do not teach that submission to timidity and being on the receiving end make a saint. St. Paul writes, "For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7). Striving to become a saint means to become close to God, empowered by the beatitudes, and prayerfully discern what is right and willingly do it. It means overcoming weaknesses and evil with goodness (Romans 12:21). It may be one's own weakness and evil or another person's weakness and evil. It may be in small matters or in big matters. It requires cooperating with God's grace.

Some of those who do not believe in hell do outrageous things not minding their afterlife. We do not belong to such group. We all believe in our heavenly home. Therefore, we need to journey together. Let us bear with one another and help one another in every way possible so that all of us become citizens of heaven hereafter. Amen.

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