

## All Saints “Called to Be Saints”

Fr. Frank Schuster

Many years ago, at the School Mass for All Saints when I was pastor at Assumption in Bellingham, I asked the kids, "If I sold my house and my car, had a big garage sale, and gave all my money to the church, would that get me into heaven. "NO" the children all answered. If I cleaned the church every day, mowed the yard, and kept everything neat and tidy, would that get me into heaven?" Again the answer was, "NO!" Well, then, if I was kind to animals and gave candy to all the children of the school and parish, would that get me into heaven?" I asked them again. Once more they all answered, "NO!" "Well," I continued, thinking they were a good bit more theologically sophisticated than I had given them credit for, "then how can I get into heaven?" One of the second graders shouted out, "YOU GOTTA BE DEAD!"

As funny as that was, this child's answer couldn't be farther from the truth! The saints are alive! The saints are alive with Jesus! We hope to be with them someday too. It can be a little confusing this time of year with Halloween getting so much attention. As you recall, Halloween is old English for All Hallows Eve. Just like Christmas Eve is the night before Christmas. All Hallows Eve is the night before the feast of All Hallows. All Hallows is old English for All Holies or All Saints Day, which falls on Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> each year. This is the mass we are celebrating today, the feast of All Hallows. We are celebrating the lives of the saints, and they are not dead, they are alive, leading us to Christ.

Why is All Saints an important celebration? As St. Bernard of Clairvaux mentions in today's office of readings, we do not celebrate this day because the saints somehow need our praise. They are in the presence of God, and need nothing. This is the simple reason why we celebrate this day: We all hope to be saints someday. You may have heard how Dorothy Day, the famous soup kitchen activist during the depression, responded to a reporter who called her a saint for all the good work she did. Dorothy Day responded, "Do not dismiss me that easily". Isn't that great? We are all called to be saints. That is why we come to Church, say our prayers, love God and love neighbor, and persevere in good works and charity. We all want to make the world a better place. My friends, do you know the word we use that defines someone who is in heaven? We call people who are in heaven saints. We all want to be saints. This is why we follow Jesus in the hopes that we will be saints someday.

What is a saint? A saint is someone who by the example of their lives leads people closer to Christ. A saint is someone who is in right relationship with God. The Church gives us official saints whose example and intercession can help lead us to Christ and eternal life in heaven. But there are also saintly people in our lives who lead us to Christ and heaven by the example of their lives.

My friends, who are the saints in your life? Who are the saints in your life? St. Francis? St. Dominic? St. Anthony? The Mother of our Lord? Saint Teresa of Calcutta? Saint Vincent de Paul? Who are the saints in your life? Who bring you closer to Christ? When people get hung up on the Church's reverence for saints I just simply tell them that Saints are simply our baseball cards. You know what I am talking about right? When I was young kids would collect baseball cards of your favorite athletes, hoping to be like them someday. You are not worshiping them. You are simply admiring them, asking for their intercession so they can lead you closer to Jesus in your own life. We do that all the time with relatives who have passed away. I still receive spiritual guidance from my grandparents and relatives who have passed away. They are with me in my prayers. They are also my baseball cards, follow?

Who are the saints in your life? Who leads you closer to Jesus? Now, ask yourself this question, are you living your life as to be a saint? Famous author and Trappist Monk Thomas Merton once wrote about how, during his youth, a friend asked him what he wanted to do with his life? Thomas said he responded weakly, "well, I suppose I should want to be a good Catholic." His friend responded to Thomas' answer, "Rubbish, what you should say is that you want to become a saint." That challenge stayed with Thomas for his entire life, "what you should say is that you want to become a saint." Let's listen again to what Jesus promises to those who strive for sanctity in their lives. This is what Jesus promises.

"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"They will be comforted."

"They will inherit the land."

"They will be satisfied."

"They will be shown mercy."

"They will see God."

"They will be called children of God."

"Theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"Your reward will be great in heaven".

My friends, today is All Saints Day. Therefore, today is our day. We remember our vocation given to us in and through Christ. We remember those who have gone before us marked with the sign of faith. We look forward to the kingdom of heaven, that endless day surrounded by those we love in the presence of the angels and saints, in the radiant presence of our Lord, who lives in reigns forever and ever. Amen.