

All Saints 2022 “Saints Lead Us Closer to Christ”
Bishop Frank Schuster

Any of you get trick or treaters last night? I was at my brother’s house, and it was a good evening. In addition to the trick or treaters it turned into an impromptu family gathering. You see, as a priest and how as a bishop I don’t mind Halloween. It is silly fun, and it encourages people to get out of their houses and meet their neighbors. Personally, I like the funny costumes the most, like the kid who comes as a cardboard box or a banana. I once saw a young girl who was dressed like a Kenmore oven, complete with a tray of cupcakes to give out. Another kid came dressed like a hotdog, so I told him his costume was the wurst...get it, bratwurst. Nobody gets me.

For those who read my article in NW Catholic, yes, I did continue my tradition by sprinkling holy cards in the candy bowl. They disappear as the night goes on which makes me smile. As you recall, Halloween is Old English for the Evening before All Hallows or All Holies. Halloween literally means the evening before the feast day of All Saints, and so here we are. This feast day celebrates every saint, even the ones we might not know about but are known to God. And to be clear: we are celebrating the lives of the saints because they are not dead. They are alive with Christ leading us to Christ.

Why is this celebration of All Saints important? 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. There is a more basic reason why we celebrate this day: We all hope to be saints someday. 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. So, who here wants to be a saint, raise your hand? Every hand should be up!

What is a saint? The simple definition: A saint is someone who by the example of their lives leads people closer to Christ. Sometimes we can get accused by our protestant brothers and sisters that we somehow “worship” saints. Have you ever heard that? We do not worship saints. A saint is someone who by the example of their lives leads us closer to Christ. So, one way to understand the role of saints in our tradition: the saints are our baseball cards. As kids we might collect baseball cards of favorite players. We might even try to dress like them, and imitate them, because if we do so we might be able to play baseball like them someday, if we wear our Nikes and eat our Wheaties, you get the picture.

The saints are our baseball cards. We do not worship them, but we do admire them, seek their help, and try to imitate them, do what they do, so to grow closer to Christ. Make sense to you? 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. If they are in heaven, this feast day today celebrates them as well.

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? St. Vincent de Paul? Saint Teresa of Calcutta? Who are the saints in your life? Who bring you closer to Christ? Your parents perhaps? Your spouse? A friend? Perhaps a deceased friend or relative? Who are the saints in your life? 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 Thomas what he wanted to do with his life? Thomas 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, or at least a day to remind us of who we are called to be. 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 and reigns forever and ever. Amen.